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FOR NEA/ARP AMACDONALD AND INR SMOFFAT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/27/2019
TAGS: [ETRD](#) [ETTC](#) [PARM](#) [PTER](#) [YM](#)
SUBJECT: ROYG REPORTS SEIZURE OF IRANIAN-CREWED SHIP WITH
HOUTHI-BOUND WEAPONS

REF: A. SANAA 1963
[1](#)B. SANAA 1870

Classified By: Ambassador Stephen Seche for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (S) ROYG officials and the Yemeni media report that ROYG maritime forces intercepted an Iranian-crewed ship transporting a large quantity of weapons on October 26. The ROYG Embassy in Washington issued a press statement on October 26 announcing that the Yemeni Navy and Coast Guard "seized a foreign vessel carrying a quantity of arms and other goods in its territorial waters west of Midi seaport," which is located in Hajja governorate, along the south-western border of war-torn Sa'ada governorate. It reports that the "five-man crew" consisted of five Iranian nationals. These are presumably the same five Iranians who President Saleh referred to in his October 26 meeting with the Ambassador (ref a), when Saleh claimed that five Iranians had just been arrested for smuggling weapons to the Houthis. Saleh said the men had been taken to Sana'a to be interrogated, and promised to provide further information about their activities and the circumstances of their arrest. (Note: When contacted on October 27, the Directorate of Military Intelligence refused to confirm the arrests. End Note.)

[1](#)2. (SBU) Al-Watan Online and Al-Arabiya reported that the Yemeni Navy seized an Iranian ship transporting arms, including anti-tank weapons, in the Red Sea near the coast of Midi. The ship was allegedly heading to a location near Haradh in order to off-load the weapons for delivery to the Houthis. According to both media outlets, the six-person crew -) five Iranians and one Indian -) were detained and taken to Sana'a for interrogation. Sources told Al-Watan Online that weapons experts and trainers were on the ship to support the Houthis. Strangely, the official press has not reported on the incident. However, Al-Motamar, the ruling General People's Congress (GPC) party's mouthpiece, ran the story on its website on October 27. It also reported that the crew consisted of five Iranians and one Indian, and that the weapons were believed to be destined for the Houthis. Agence France Press quoted an anonymous official who said that the "five Iranians are instructors" who planned to deliver the weapons to the Houthis. Nasser Al-Rabiye, a journalist for Gulf News, reported that the five-member crew consisted of four Iranians and one Indian. According to anonymous security sources quoted in his account, the weapons would be hidden on a farm near Haradh, to later be smuggled to the Houthis.

[1](#)3. (C) COMMENT. As with its prior claims that Iran is supporting the Houthis with weapons and financial resources, the ROYG has yet to produce evidence of the alleged weapons shipment or the detained Iranian crew. If the account is true, however, it marks the second arms shipment that the

ROYG has blocked this month (ref b). It remains to be seen if this shipment, like its predecessor, sought to enter the country using forged Ministry of Defense documents, or if it is in any way related to the ROYG-issued blacklist of Sa'ada arms traffickers, or, for that matter, to the Houthis themselves. END COMMENT.
SECHE